

USAID Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Issue 1
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Introduction

USAID's policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment was released on March 1, 2012. While the policy is now in effect, a timetable for phasing in the new requirements – such as adoption of a Mission Order on Gender and appointment of a Mission Gender Advisor - will be released shortly, following consultations with relevant bureaus. Please note that the timetable for phasing in the new requirements will be aligned with other Agency-wide processes to minimize additional burdens in the field.

In the meantime, this is the first issue of Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about USAID's Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment. This is a living document and additional FAQs will be issued on an ongoing and rolling basis. The main audience for this internal USAID document is USAID staff, but information can be shared with implementing partners and other interested parties.

These “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) are intended to provide guidance to missions and Operating Units (OUs) in implementing the policy on gender equality and female empowerment. They intentionally do not provide too many specified rules and standard procedures. OUs, missions, and Gender Advisors/POCs are encouraged to thoughtfully consider their unique circumstances to determine how best to meet the requirements in the policy.

Implementing the policy successfully requires that we become a learning community. This means becoming more deliberate and systematic about our efforts, tracking more carefully our outputs and outcomes, and investing in monitoring and evaluation. We welcome continuous feedback from USAID staff and partners as to best practices and challenges in the policy's implementation.

Feedback and questions can be channeled in several ways:

Anyone is welcome to send questions or comments to Caren Grown at cgrown@usaid.gov.

You can also contact the Gender Advisors and POCs in your mission, in the regional and pillar bureaus, and the GenDev Office.

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1. USAID'S APPROACH

Q. What is new in this policy that isn't already in the ADS or other policies and guidance?

A. The policy supersedes the 1982 "Women in Development" Policy Paper and 1996 Gender Plan of Action. The world has changed considerably since those documents were issued, and the literature and field experience related to closing gender gaps have substantially expanded as well. Therefore, the policy includes new information about why gender equality and female empowerment are fundamental principles for USAID, and how they relate to other development sectors and policies. The policy also includes new expected outcomes, and new roles and responsibilities to achieve those outcomes. A few examples of the many new elements include:

- Greater emphasis on female empowerment;
- Formal designation of a permanent and full-time USAID Senior Coordinator on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Office of the Administrator and Senior Gender Advisor in the Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning;
- A requirement that missions and bureaus appoint Gender Advisors or in some cases POCs.

Q. What's the difference between women's empowerment and female empowerment?

A. This policy deliberately uses the term "female" empowerment, as opposed to women's empowerment, to capture girls and adolescents as well as adult women. Some USAID offices and position descriptions use the term "women's empowerment" but their activities also include girls and adolescent females.

Q. Why does this policy add an explicit focus on female empowerment when the Agency has focused on gender equality (which involves both women and men) in the past?

A. USAID continues to place major emphasis on closing gender gaps and increasing gender equality, as articulated in the policy. As in the past, achieving this goal will most often involve engaging and working with both women and men. However, it remains true across the world that when gender gaps exist, these most frequently disadvantage women and girls, and in many countries, females remain unable to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential. Because remedying this situation is so important to achieving the Agency's overall development goals, this policy specifically focuses attention on increased female empowerment along with greater gender equality.

Q. How does this policy relate to the Agency's newly released Countering Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Policy and the National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security?

A. The Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, the CTIP Policy, and the NAP were developed in a coordinated and synergistic fashion. The three documents reinforce one another, and projects and activities that fulfill the mandates of one will generally be consistent with one or both of the others as well. Taken together, these three documents can be viewed as a package in their emphasis on a renewed commitment to achieving better development outcomes for all by increasing the participation of women and girls, ensuring that their rights are respected, and enabling them to live happy and productive lives safe from violence and abuse.

Q. Does the policy include LGBT individuals?

A. Yes, the policy has an explicit focus on an inclusive approach to gender equality, comprising all people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, including transgender and intersex individuals (p. 3 and 12). The policy also emphasizes building partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations that focus on the concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals (page 13). The policy also underscores that sexual and gender based violence (GBV) can be perpetrated by someone of any gender and that the victim can be of any gender, and that sexual orientation and gender identity are included in defining GBV (p. 8). The inclusion of LGBT individuals in the policy is consistent with the December 2011 [Presidential Memorandum](#) on International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons.

Q. How do we promote gender equality in countries where there is significant resistance due to prevailing religious or cultural norms?

A. USAID's approach is to support the voices of women and others who are working to advance a set of universal rights and promote human development. In almost all countries there is some degree of debate about gender equality and female empowerment, whether it is obvious to people outside the country or not. In fact, some of the most effective female activists and women's movements are in countries where there appears to be significant resistance to these principles. USAID is already addressing gender inequalities in such countries, in line with the Paris-Accra-Busan agreements, supporting local efforts to ensure that women and men have an equal say in how their societies develop, and in how they are governed, because these things will *affect* them equally. Furthermore, almost every country in the world has signed or ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), committing them to take measures to end discrimination against women in all forms. Though the United States has not ratified CEDAW, USAID efforts should reinforce these existing country commitments.

Q. How can we convince men to support increased gender equality and female empowerment?

A. There are many examples around the world of male champions who struggle daily for gender equality and female empowerment. USAID missions and operating units should engage these champions in seeking creative ways to foster more widespread acceptance of gender equality and female empowerment among the male population. One approach involves shifting the locus of conversation away from what men have to lose if women are empowered to what individual men, families, communities, and societies all stand to gain if women are empowered. Such gains are numerous and include increased household income, more representative and effective parliaments, a more inclusive and better-performing economy that takes advantage of the skills of all workers, increased educational opportunities and better health for children, among other outcomes. Men will be more inclined to support gender equality if they do not see it as a zero sum game in which they have the most to lose. It is also useful to remember that public opinion surveys usually demonstrate broad support for women's rights among men, even in relatively conservative societies; often the picture is distorted because the most conservative with regard to these issues are the most outspoken.

Q. If USAID's approach to gender equality is through integrating gender issues into all development activities/projects, does this mean that we cannot specifically focus on women and girls?

A. No, as outlined in the first principle in the new policy, within the broad goal of integrating gender across USAID's projects/activities, missions may also develop specific gender equality Development Objectives (DOs) and all OUs may invest in stand-alone projects that are determined to be strategic to the achievement of gender equality and female empowerment as a result of gender analysis. Such projects/activities should address the most critical gender gaps in particular contexts or direct resources to where they are most needed to empower females and should be linked to broader sectoral and country programming.

Q. Since USAID promotes gender equality, do all projects have to have equal numbers of male and female participants?

A. No, the extent to which men and women are involved in specific projects/activities depends on the nature of the project/activity and should be informed by gender analysis. In some cases, closing gender gaps may involve working with members of only one sex (e.g., projects that seek to reduce risky behaviors in men that lead to shortened life spans, or projects that focus on increasing the number of girls who graduate from primary school). In other cases, even though both sexes are involved in a project/activity, a variety of factors (e.g., the proportion of men and women in the sector in question, time constraints, lack of access to the program) can lead to higher numbers of male or female participants. In general, USAID should seek to address barriers and constraints to participation for both sexes so as to achieve balanced representation of men and women in projects and activities.

Q: Since USAID's goal is to promote gender equality, does this means that men and women have to be treated in exactly the same way in our projects and activities?

A. No. Achieving increased equality as an outcome often depends on treating men and women differently in order to overcome historical disadvantages (e.g., specifically seeking to enroll more women than men as participants in an economic empowerment project because women are starting from a point of greater economic disadvantage). Moreover, the cultural context may also necessitate different treatment of men and women to achieve results for development.

2. OUTCOMES

Q. How do I translate the outcomes discussed in Section 4 of the policy into specific results and programs?

A. The outcomes specified in the policy are: 1) Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over and benefit from resources, wealth, opportunities and services - economic, social, political, and cultural; 2) Reduce gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects on individuals; and 3) Increase capability of women and girls to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies. The policy gives the example of a food security strategy, wherein the first outcome could be operationalized as “Reduce the gap between female and male farmers’ access to productive inputs and services (credit, seeds, new technology, and agricultural extension) by 25 percent.” Indicators like the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index should be used to track progress toward this specific result in different country contexts.

Examples from other sectors include: in a democracy building program, increase the number of females who stand for election by 30 percent; in a program on entrepreneurship, increase the number of females who are able to access loans by X%; in a domestic violence program, increase by X% the numbers of women and children who have access to service for victims of violence; in a health program, increase by X% the number of men who have access to programs designed to reduce substance abuse.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Q. What is the role of the GenDev Office with respect to this Policy?

A. In 2011 the Women in Development (WID) Office was renamed the Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GenDev). The Office remains located in the EGAT Bureau, but it provides Agency-wide support for gender training and becoming a best practice community on gender equality and female empowerment. The specific role of GenDev with respect to this policy can be found on p. 17 of the Policy. For more information on GenDev, see: <http://inside.usaid.gov/EGAT/off-wid/index.html>

4. REQUIREMENTS

Q. What are the resource requirements for implementing the policy?

A. This policy was designed to be budget-neutral as much as possible. Implementing the policy involves a change in mind-set and the way that we do business – asking different questions, using the information gathered through gender analyses in country strategies and project designs, developing partnerships with a wider range of key stakeholders, and being more focused on gender equality and female empowerment outcomes through our development assistance.

Q. When will the ADS be revised so that the gender provisions are consistent with the policy?

A. Some minor revisions have already been made in the ADS sections that relate to gender integration in project design so that the terminology is consistent with the terminology being used in the new Program Cycle and project design guidance. However, the ADS gender provisions will also undergo a thorough review and revision that is expected to conclude around the end of June, 2012.

Q. The policy includes some new requirements for missions, bureaus and other operating units. Are these requirements expected to be implemented immediately?

A. See Question 1 above. The policy is in effect immediately, but some of the new requirements for missions will be phased in gradually. Some requirements, such as adopting or revising a Mission Order and appointing a Gender Advisor, will be expected to be completed by December 31, 2012. All of the other policy requirements, with the exception of training which will require a longer period of time, should be fully in place within two years of the issuance of the policy (March 2014).

Note: All requirements in the policy that are not new, such as the mandatory Agency requirement to conduct gender analyses in the context of CDCS and project/activity design, remain in effect and will not be affected by the forthcoming timetable.

Q. How does this new policy impact missions with existing Mission Orders adopted in the past two years and modeled closely after ADS guidance?

A. A [template](#) for a Mission Order on Gender is posted on the PPL ProgramNet Gender Page and the GenDev website. Missions that have adopted a gender order in the past two years should determine whether it is sufficient to implement the policy or needs to be updated to reflect new requirements.

Q. As a Gender Advisor in a CPC Mission I am part of a small team responsible for both institutionalizing and implementing the requirements set forth in the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. As a CPC we face challenges in policy and program implementation, unlike those of our colleagues in traditional development environments. Under the Policy, will CPCs have leeway in implementing the mandated Mission actions? For issues such as overall integration of gender into programming, the use of gender analysis, staffing, the production of a Mission Order on Gender and overall financial attributions, will CPCs be able to phase in policy requirements over a longer period of time or will we be held to the same time lines as other missions? Additionally on the programmatic side, what resources are available to enable CPC Missions to access assistance to ensure that we are in compliance with the Policy in a manner that is consistent with our operational environment?

A. Please note that the Policy became effective as of its release date of March 1, 2012 for all Washington operating units and Missions. The Policy takes into account the CPC and conflict country operating environments and understands that challenges faced in those environments are unlike those faced elsewhere. Implementation of the Policy USAID-wide is important, but takes on additional import when implemented by our colleagues operating in CPC and conflict environments. Nonetheless, some of the mandates put forward in the Policy are not new, having been overall USAID operational requirements for several years.

- Gender Integration and Gender Analysis— The ADS 200 and 300 series updated in 2007 required USAID to integrate gender issues in all activities funded by the Agency. Further, the series also sets forth the requirement for the use of Gender Analysis for all projects and programs at the concept stage. All Missions should have already phased these two requirements into their operations. Given the operational difficulties faced by CPCs, PPL in conjunction with the regional bureaus, will work with Missions to provide technical assistance to ensure Policy and ADS compliance and learning in CPCs recognizing their unique context and the challenges faced on the ground.
- Staffing— The timetable for the requirement that each Mission have a Gender Advisor is being developed in consultation with Regional Bureaus. That said, several CPCs already have, and in some cases have had for several years, either a Mission Gender Advisor or Point of Contact who play a critical role in advancing gender equality and female empowerment in these challenging environments.
- Mission Order on Gender—The template for a Mission Order on Gender is available, and the timetable for Missions to adopt a Mission Order is being developed in consultation with Regional Bureaus. In the interim, we would encourage those Missions who do not already have a Mission Order to begin the process of consultation to prepare one. Developing the Mission Order may be an important tool for sharing information and building consensus on how the Gender Policy will be implemented in the CPC. For your reference, two CPCs already have Mission Orders of this nature and they are available for reference at http://inside.usaid.gov/EGAT/off-wid/resources.html#mission_orders.
- Financial Attributions—Through the Operational Plan requirements, Missions are already required to narratively and financially report on a yearly basis on three gender specific key issues (Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Primary, Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Secondary and Gender Based Violence). In 2012, a fourth key issue on Women, Peace, and Security became mandatory, and this is particularly important for CPC countries. PPL understands that financial attributions may be difficult for some countries to calculate with regards to individual projects and/or key issues and will work with Missions and regional bureaus to provide assistance. Custom indicators may be particularly useful in these environments.

Additionally, with regard to your question about operationalization it is worth noting that there are several DC based resources available:

- Management Bureau's Transparency, Accountability and Performance (TAP) IDIQ: This is a mechanism through which operating units can obtain gender analysis services. Its purpose is to strengthen performance management practices at USAID through three categories of services; (1) Analytic Support; (2) Technical Assistance; and (3) Communication and Information Management. Additional information on this mechanism can be found at: <http://inside.usaid.gov/M/MPBP/performance/tap.html>
- Regional Bureaus: Each Regional Bureau has a Gender Advisor(s) with either country or regional specific knowledge to work directly with Missions on a wide variety of tasks including policy implementation.

- Policy, Planning and Learning: Through the Program Cycle Services Center, personnel are available for short term TDY assistance to aid Missions in all aspects of the integrated Program Cycle, including gender analysis and integration.
- Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A new IDIQ, Advancing the Agenda for Gender Equality (ADVANTAGE), is currently in development for time-sensitive, short and long-term technical services and reports and other deliverables. Other materials are available at: http://inside.usaid.gov/EGAT/off-wid/technical_areas.html. GenDev staff also support regional gender advisors in providing technical assistance to missions.

Q. If girls and women represent a large number of beneficiaries of our projects, is that considered gender integration and can we designate our funding in Operational Plans to Gender Equality/Women's Empowerment Primary?

A. No, unless the purpose of the activity focuses on gender equality or women's empowerment as an explicit objective. For example, an activity could target women to plant tree seedlings for the purpose of reforestation because they have more time available than men to engage in this activity, but if the activity does not also seek to promote women's leadership in conservation or increase the economic or other benefit to them, the activity does not meet the goal of the policy.

Q. How will gender training be tailored to position/experience so that there is not a generic one-size fits all approach?

A. A working group will be working on developing training products for different categories of staff. As these trainings come online, notices will be circulated and posted on PPL/ProgramNet and GenDev.

Q. How do I prioritize gender training for my staff when my training budget is limited?

A. We are exploring various types of training opportunities, including offering online resources already piloted by USAID staff and by other organizations. A menu of options will be developed within the next six months and posted on this webpage and the GenDev webpage.

Q. How I can incentivize my staff to better integrate gender equality and female empowerment into their work?

A. As a Senior Manager or supervisor, there are many ways to incentivize your staff to integrate gender equality and female empowerment in your portfolios. There are many awards you may choose from to recognize staff, including the Laura Bush award, the On-the-Spot awards, and other Agency-wide awards.

5. EXCEPTIONS

Q. The policy notes that small missions or those in the process of closing are exempt from the requirement of having a Gender Advisor. How are small missions defined?

A. Small missions are generally defined as those with a USAID budget of less than \$20 million. Missions below this threshold must consult with their regional bureaus and receive formal approval for the exemption. Such missions must still appoint a Gender POC.

6. TOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES

Q. Where can I find a sample Mission Order on Gender?

A. A [template](#) for a Mission Order on Gender is posted on the PPL ProgramNet Gender Page and hyperlinked to the GenDev website by April 15, 2012.

Q. Do you have any examples of how to translate the three outcomes in the policy into specific results, targets, and indicators?

A. Examples of country strategies and project designs that have measurable results will be posted on the PPL ProgramNet Gender Page and the GenDev website on a rolling basis, beginning in June 2012.

Q. Where can I find gender analysis and gender assessment tools?

A. The [GenDev](#) website, the Africa gender page, and the [E&E](#) gender pages all contain examples of gender analysis and assessment tools. More will be forthcoming and posted on the PPL ProgramNet Gender Page and the GenDev website on a rolling basis.

Q. Where can I find good examples of Project Activity Documents (PADs) that demonstrate a high degree of gender integration?

A. Stay tuned – these will be posted on a rolling basis!

Q. Where can I find gender-related sector-specific quantitative and qualitative performance indicators?

A. Information on the seven gender equality, women's empowerment, and gender-based violence output and outcome indicators in FACTS Info that can be used in Performance Plans and Reports is available on the [F website](#) in the [Cross-Cutting Indicator handbook](#) on pages 32-50.

Beyond these indicators, other references for designing custom indicators will be posted on the PPL ProgramNet Gender Page and the GenDev website in the near future.

Q. Is there a checklist or parameters that would help in monitoring the implementation of the policy?

A. The parameters that will be used to monitor the implementation of the policy are being developed and will be posted June 2012.